

Application No. 10/706,947
Amendment dated March 21, 2008
Reply to Office Action dated November 23, 2007

REMARKS

Reconsideration And Allowance Are Respectfully Requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 16-20 are currently pending. Claims 1, 4 and 16 have been amended. Claim 3 was previously canceled. Claim 6 has been canceled by way of the present amendment. Claims 8-15 and 21-26, which were previously withdrawn based upon a prior restriction requirement, have been canceled without prejudice for pursuing these claims in a subsequently filed divisional application. No new matter has been added. No new claims have been added. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

With regard to the outstanding rejections, claims 1, 2 and 5-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,230,385 to Nelson ("Nelson"). In addition, claims 16-18 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,614,915 to Perry ("Perry"). In addition, claim 4 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nelson. These rejections are respectfully traversed in view of the preceding amendments and the remarks which follow.

With regard to claim 1, claim 1 has been amended so as to define a disengageable connector for interconnecting panels. The connector includes a longitudinally extending connector body having a substantially similar profile along its entire length. The connector body includes a base and a projection extending from the base. The base includes a top surface and a bottom surface. The bottom surface is composed of an underside consisting essentially of a first footing member

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extending downwardly from the bottom surface of the base, a second footing member extending downwardly from the bottom surface of the base and a third footing member extending downwardly from the bottom surface of the base. A first protrusion extending vertically from the base adjacent a first edge of the base. The first protrusion includes a top portion and the first protrusion decreases in height as it extends from the center of the base toward an edge of the base. A second protrusion extends vertically from the base adjacent a second edge, opposite the first edge, of the base. The second protrusion includes a top portion and the second protrusion decreases in height as it extends from the center of the base toward an edge of the base. The first protrusion and the second protrusion are spaced apart from the projection and are located on either side of the projection. The first footing member and the second footing members are respectively positioned beneath the first protrusion and the second protrusion, and the third footing member is positioned beneath the projection. The first footing member, the second footing member and the third footing member are spaced by a first recess extending fully between the first footing member and the third footing member and a second recess extending fully between the second footing member and the third footing member. The first footing member, the second footing member and the third footing member are shaped and dimensioned to compress into an underlying foam pad to a predetermined limited extent such that the connector sits upon the underlying foam pad with the top surface of the base lying in substantially the same plane as the upper surface of the underlying foam pad.

In contrast to the claimed invention, Nelson merely discloses a divider track having a series of ridges along the bottom thereof. As such, Nelson does not disclose a connector wherein the bottom surface of the base is composed of an underside consisting essentially of the first footing

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member, the second footing member and the third footing member. Nelson further fails to disclose a connector having recesses that extend fully between first, second and third footing members as claimed in accordance with the present invention. As such, Nelson fails to disclose each and every feature of the claimed invention and Applicant respectfully requests the rejection based upon Nelson be withdrawn.

Further, and with reference to claim 4, claim 4 has been rewritten in independent form. The Office Action rejects claim 4 stating that the criticality of the dimensions presented in claim 4 have not been presented. With this in mind, the Examiner is referenced to Page 16, lines 1-22, where the rationale for the specific dimensions relating to the depth of the footing members is set forth in substantial detail. With this disclosure in mind, Applicant reiterates the earlier remarks that the limitations set forth in claim 4 are important to the functioning of the connector claimed in accordance with the present invention and the remarks of the Office Action are inappropriate as it would not have been a matter of design choice to utilize these limitations. In fact, the primary reference used against the present application is to Nelson, who is also the sole inventor of the present application. If it had in fact been obvious to utilize those dimensions, would not Nelson have incorporated a similar design in his earlier application?

As to those claims dependent upon claim 1, they are also believed to overcome the references of record for the reasons presented above and Applicant respectfully requests these rejections also be withdrawn.

Further, and with regard to the rejection of claim 16, claim 16 has been amended so as to define a disengageable connector for interconnecting panels. The connector includes a

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longitudinally extending connector body. The connector body includes a base having a longitudinal extent with a first end and a second end. The connector further includes a projection extending vertically from a top surface of the base. The projection includes a central stem with first and second outwardly extending members extending from the central stem. The connector further includes a first protrusion extending vertically from the base adjacent a first edge of the base along an entire length of the base. A second protrusion extends vertically from the base adjacent a second edge, opposite the first edge, of the base along the entire length of the base. The second protrusion includes a top portion and the second protrusion decreases in height as it extends from the center of the base toward an edge of the base. The projection extends beyond the longitudinal extent of the base along at least one end of the base to define an outwardly extending ear.

In contrast to the claimed invention, Perry fails to disclose a connector including the claimed projection having a central stem with first and second outwardly extending members extending from the central stem, first and second protrusions as claimed and wherein the projection extends beyond the longitudinal extent of the base along at least one end of the base to define an outwardly extending ear.

With this in mind, it is Applicant's opinion Perry fails to disclose each and every feature of amended claim 16 and Applicant respectfully requests the rejection thereof be withdrawn.

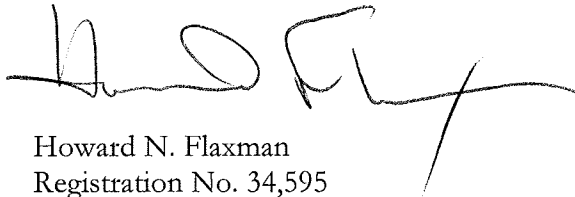
In addition, claim 18 has been amended so as to define that the first and second footing members extend the entire length of the base. Based upon the interpretation offered in the outstanding Office Action, it is believed this amendment overcomes Perry and, further to the rejection of claim 16 presented above, claim 18 is believed to overcome the disclosure of Perry.

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As to those claims dependent upon independent claim 16, they are also believed to overcome the references of record and Applicant respectfully requests these rejections also be withdrawn.

It is believed that this case is in condition for allowance and reconsideration thereof and early issuance is respectfully requested. If it is felt that an interview would expedite prosecution of this application, please do not hesitate to contact Applicant's representative at the below number.

Respectfully submitted,



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